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northern review

STORIES
PACKY — FREDERICK NIES

POETRY
EXPERIMENT IN ISOLATION — A. E. FAREBROTHER
TWO POEMS — DAVID STACTON
ACIDIA
INFORMER
POEM — MARION SCHOEBERLEIN
THE BIRD OF PARADISE — JAMES REANEY

ARTICLES
CANADIAN COMMENT — JOHN SUTHERLAND

FILM
M. SARTRE'S INFERNAL MACHINE — GUY GLOVER

PAINTING
MILLER BRITTAIN
TWO PAINTINGS BY MILLER BRITTAIN
A NOTE BY THE ARTIST

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PATERSON — RONALD BATES
SUICIDE NOTE — R. G. SIMPSON
NOTES FROM A JOURNEY
STORM BELOW
MYSSIUM

VOLUME 2
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Packy

Frederick Nies

The other chunky red brick dorms seemed taking off against the suck of white flakes . . . trailer giants, a fleet, off for the highway below . . . for Brooklyn.

This, through the curtainless panes of B-Cottage, held the eye of one boy. Thirty in their teens sat inhaling creosote from the floor oil and listening. The man up front had won their fix. All the dull morning crowded his angry glasses.

"NOW. This bullying stops—NOW."

Their new cottage father stood handing it out to them.

Patches wormed on the rearmost seat. Jerko was filling with the thought: "now they'll think I squealed". Half wild at the way the snow had made Adjustmentville so strange in the early light, he'd darted, sparred, he'd leapt into the basement four steps at a time shouting into the air for no reason, "Gibberty Gibberty Gotzen Goo". Rio with Tarzan and Scavoney had to be there. Gibberty Gibberty meant bad about your mother. If you didn't have a mother or maybe hated her—just the same, one word about your mother. A shove from Rio hadn't sent him backwards over Scavoney because he'd smelled Scavoney crouching behind him; but Rio had Tarzan boost him high up so they could slam him to the cement smash on one of his jug ears. To the new cottage father who got there almost before Jerko was alone, Jerko had choked out, "He's always bothering people". Almost said who He was.

In tones now quiet enough for the radiator's hiss to come through, the man was telling the roomful something about cooperation. Jerko's face, mottled with dry tearwipe, grew vague. It turned to a springburst cushion in the corner: Mammocat tumbled Supercatso to her and began to lick the tiny squoonched-up head. The bite was leaving Jerko's ear.

He could be the only one sick and looked after in bed; he felt away already. Who'd have thought him important enough to call a meeting about . . . ? Brown wall. Silver rims alive in front of it. The voice had sharpened.

"Who tells you it's unmanly to speak up when bigger guys bat you around? A lazy grown-up. Or", it exploded, "a bully who knows he'd be through if you did."

Not just size, Jerko knew. He smalled: an eyecorner had given one green rearward flick.

Hardly a stir to the head. Bony after clippers it drooped

between Tarzan's shoulder and the dark restlessness of Scavoney—Rio's, slender, tilted . . . all that was lonely washed up over Jerko. Like close to the pennies in Brooklyn when fingers tightened into him and he knew it was the Truant Officer. He shied to the untired voice:

"A gangster threatens your dad. Is he a squealer for calling a cop?"

Jerko took a moment for 'cop', another to separate gangster and father, guessed a hundred and eighty pounds for this man who messed in fellows' affairs—and then he looted the words.

He ran with them to the basement, no, to the snow fort. There he stuck his face up to the Three. He snarled so loudly anyone who'd promised to help could hear, "Yaah, make me be the Commie all the time like you kep me the Jap willya? Yaaaah!"

" . . . that's all. Locker inspection at eleven."

The room which came back was sharper than real, hard to budge in as a dream: chairs scraping back, the faces looking at each other, at him, waiting for someone to start a feeling. The cottage father had woven something that persisted. Even Rio was slow. Then on his feet, stoop-shouldered, thin as Jerko, he clasped his bicep and screwed after the retreating spade neck. The worst about your mother. Failure of the man to wheel at the sniggers made him that much sucker. He was disappearing now, yet something from the meeting cauled Jerko and he did not plunge for the door.

He looked into Rio's freckled pallor. "I ain't said nothing."

Rio made an edge of his mouth smile: "Guilt-ty conscience?"

Under long clear lash but in old-man sockets sagged at the outer corners the eyes followed, on a level with Jerko's own. Sun through a glass marble gave that blurry sweet green. He glanced appeal at Fatso Mears over by the cushion. The freckled hand twisted his shirt front.

"Squealer!"

And Scavoney's spray: "Bubbo you gon get it bubbo." A glimpse of Tarzan's hand sickling for a commando at his Adam's Apple gave Jerko the energy to wrench loose. His minutes-ago stand at the snow fort, the adult voice . . . he raised fists and shrilled—at Scavoney—"Y'ain't batting *me* around *bubbo*."

"Squealer." Rio yanked him to; his shoulder suddenly showed through the twisted shirt. Tarzan had his right fist and was screwing it up behind his back. They didn't believe him; didn't want to believe his piercing denials. It was as much the ceaseless thumping of of his ear by Scavoney as his racked arm that brought convulsion. "Oh God lemme go!"

"Chickie." Rio was with the cats. Scavoney, then Tarzan, dropped to the checker table.

The cottage father looked past the heaving, acrid boy to the

checkers frantically jumping each other—half not on squares. Then across to the cushion.

"Riordan! Come here."

Rio never quite straightened. His brows lifted moderately.

"Over here." The new cottage father pointed sharply to the floor in front of him. "You birds weren't in Brooklyn when I talked."

The heads of the checker players came up; innocence bulged. "We do nothing," Scavoney said.

"Yeh," Tarzan growled, "Hanh Rio?"

Rio explained. "Ah we was arguing bout that prejudice movie last week. Who play in it."

The man's attention swung to Jerko.

Jerko studied his shoes.

"Hey, Jeyko," Rio's lashes had crept way down, "Mr. Odell's waitn. What was we arguing about?"

"Movie", Jerko mumbled.

"Packy, go to my office." A muscle showed from the cottage father's jawbone to his collar. "Keck, you and Scavoney wash all the roosts in the henhouse, scrape the floor and haul fresh straw in and be through by inspection."

"Honest, Mr. Odells"—honesty tortured Scavoney's features.

"We're all honest. We just get too much wax in our ears sometimes. Cut!"

Then something happened which Jerko had never dreamed to see. He had been rooted, not just to know the worst about what Rio would get, but because of a guilty wish: the Three weighed over twice the cottage father; they were mad; they could disobey; and supporting Odells was losing the fight anyway, or barely holding his own, Jerko could slam Odells from behind with something and then maybe they wouldn't work on him next. What occurred was that the cottage father said, "Riordan, help Mears take those cats to the furnace room." Rio looked very funny and for once confused and then gave the littlest shrug. Scavoney's mouth got so big in anger the skin pushed over all but a black nick of eye; Tarzan jutted. And it was directed, the last of it, not at the cottage father or Jerko but at the cushion going out with the worried cathead swaying over. Rio glanced back at the noises from their throats, caught their glare and didn't turn round again.

Then the man said, "Cut for the coop," and moved only a little toward Tarzan and Scavoney. They rasped about concentration camps but they did go.

On the walls of the office a light patch with a nail in it was all that was left of Old Fireballs' Indian princess and her canoe. But the best change by the new cottage father was naming him Packy like a

prizefighter. His name was Patrick Graber. Everybody called Rio what he wanted to be called but who except somebody younger like Tootcarl had ever said Pat instead of Jerko . . . ? He waited in the straight wood chair.

The new cottage father reamed his pipe and blew through it. "Packy," came quietly across the desk, "you know what a stooge is?"

"Yeah."

"It's fun being Riordan's stooge, isn't it?"

Jerko scowled weakly. "Ain't no stooge."

"No-o? You were off sawing wood when that window was kicked in yesterday. Didn't you take the blame for it?"

Picking at a hangnail Jerko had to listen.

"They treat you better for licking the dirt off their feet, don't they? They love you for kissing their rears every time they spit on you."

Color began to float the smudges on the boy's cheeks. His glance, switching between match flame and smoke pops, went sparrow-like to the brow demanding reply. His mouth clung shut; he had to shake his head carefully as one might bead off.

"N—o-o?" A spring yawned as the man settled calmly with his locked hands behind his head. "Well that's something to think about, isn't it? The next itch you get to back up the fellows who make it hell for you."

"Y-you ain't around all the time."

The new cottage father said he and Mrs. Odell would keep their eyes peeled. "Now Packy, listen. And *think*. You've got a brain or I wouldn't be talking to you. Suppose all of a sudden you stop being Riordan's yellow dog." The chair sang upright again as the man, pipe locked in teeth, stopped being Rio's yellow dog. "Maybe he'd lick you."

Jerko's whites enlarged at the thing suggested in such a matter-of-fact tone. He heard his voice poop feebly: "Wouldn't be just Him."

"All right, *they*. You get beat up. Then you come openly to me. Think I'm your big brother. You're hardly a squealer if it's your big brother."

He rose and going round to the boy, forced his chin up gently. Under a nap of brown wiry curls the eyes were withdrawing like touched periwinkles. Life couldn't alter the triangled perky snub, but the mouth was skewed and collapsed.

The man let go suddenly. "All right, boy, after I punish them they pile on again. Couldn't you live through it? Because *then* if you had the guts to speak up"—his hand slammed the desk—"this business *ends* at Adjustmentville."

Jerko lost some of his slouch. "What would they get?"

"The works."

The works was what they called it when They got Hay Johnson last year. Tarzan had let him have it when he wouldn't kneel after Tarzan had sneaked him into the attic. Hay told Old Fireballs. Then Hay in the furnace room to see his, Packy's, turtle and the whole baying cottage jumping him, so many on top of Hay only his fingers could move, clawing cement, his cries turkey talk as Rio rode his throat . . . sweat cooled Jerko under the arms as he saw the overhead pipe, the strap around it buckled through the towel around Hay's neck. If Hay ever let go that pipe . . . Hay not yelling now for Fireballs but slabber-mouthed, changing hands like crazy on the heating pipe. Hay breezed after that. No grown-up ever knew.

"Are you taking this in, Packy? It's the most important decision you'll ever make in your life. This is America, boy! Everyone has a right to walk without jumping at his shadow. Look: a new boy comes up here. Wouldn't it be swell to have him friendly the next day instead of picking a fuss just to show he's hep to your rating? You've got a brain!"

How long would Tarzan keep a hating jaw out at Rio? It had happened though. The boy railed as if all the dredged-up pain were a gas within which he sat dampening the oak arms. "I'—ll try." He wanted to add that the cottage father couldn't be around all the time.

"That's *Packy* talking. No questions?"

Jerko shook his head.

"Got it all straight?"

A thread of saliva spanned Jerko's lips. "Yeah," he whispered.

"Good." The new cottage father lifted the willing chin. "Hold it that way. And wash that face." He clapped the small shoulder-blades.

The living room was empty. It took Jerko, behind its doors, a while to feel this. Rumpled comics, chairs whose disorder formed precise pal groupings—they weren't cold right away. Such a sliver of this room had ever belonged to him . . . almost wrongly it grew his. He could sit on the coach, sprawl its leatheroid humps and hollows with this forced bodying of what he'd been ashamed to know; could tongue it like a new gum socket.

A strangeness flaring, dimming. A what's-coming like when the social worker first showed him Adjustmentville: "I'm betting on you, Pat; you've got the stuff." The time his old man was so stunk up he dreaded him dead for sure—a little like that, too. Last Spring on the El to Coney, scrambling for a sight of the Ferris Wheel and dirtying his white ducks and Miss Teevan, the other social worker, saying, " . . . respect for your person and you'll be a lady-killer.

You've got—" He put her bright bright voice with the new cottage father's 'brain'—"Stuff!"

He would go and wash himself real clean.

First, rolling a comic book, he sighted at the greening foggo face framed above the hearth. "A-a-a," he said to Picklepuss who had given his picture and the cottage. He circled, he crouched behind a table and gave Picklepuss another burst, "A-a-a". How big the room made his voice.

"Tale of Two Cities" on the comic pook. Nobody he knew. He tossed aside other covers with their bat masks, hawk masks, sunshiny bursts from blue barrels. There: with the T on his great chest.

"Teleman. Calling Teleman," flashed a message by mind radio. "Scarpus come to life, Scarpus casing Fort Knox. Hurry Teleman. That is all." Pancaking, he skimmed rooftops hunting the gold-greedy Pompeian who after a thousand years of suspended life sealed like a horned toad in the porous ash of Vesuvius was loose again. With Bludius, his magic homing ax.

At bay finally, among the gold pieces lining the vault: grim, great-carved Scarpus, a-glitter in mail and helmet. And opposing him? Just brains and stuff. Telepathically he read the ancient thug's mind, dodged, caught the ax in mid-flight, redirected its arc so that instead of returning to the hand of Scarpus, *bong* it crashed against his forehead felling him in a shower of red stars. Have a lumpus, chumpus! Jerko giggled so hard the tears came loose after all. What mouths on the F. B. I. when he dropped Scarpus at their feet. And goombye—he was lost in the high blue . . .

Only to streak to another crime—the book screwed tight in his fist—an unceasing, long-unrighted crime.

But—how could he be the Sky Rider and at the same time the brave boy fighting off three bullies? Reluctantly he was the only kid with his back to the snowfort, sending up thought SOS's. Silver lens rims glinted like a bomber; the red jersey with an N for new cottage father dove. No atom bomb—that would get it over too quick. Big fists began to bash their ears and wham their guts.

"Say we're friends, huh Packy? Ah Jesus, Packy?" Riordan sobbed while the other two just bawled. But the gay brave lad's response was, "Any special color for Easter, chums (*crunk, crunk, crunk*—he'd hung a rotten egg on each of their kissers) or will just plain egg do?"

The flutter of cords behind Jerko's knees kept him from realizing that he was standing on the comic book for which his hand had not entirely lost its curve. When he reached the doors the fluttering warned: if they caught me listening in the hall! He wound up by the

empty hearth trying to guess something from their voices which had lowered to a disharmony. How long had Rio been in there? Then a harsh "Go down and wait till inspection," and the office door banged

Darkness filled the enclosed staircase to the basement except for a pole of light edging past the fire door at its foot.

"He hit you?" Scavoney's high pitch, bottled, from the furnace room.

"—me a drag off that."

"Friggin' hen's floor 'n roosts."—never before had Tarzan had such rawness in his throat for his pal—"Me nor Scavoney we hadna right to catch grief excepting you did too. You had a right to catch even your teeth kicked. We're taking no hen's nothing off you."

"*Hel*-lo Supercatts . . . *hel*-lo little mole. Can't even see my finger yet f'Jesez . . . why ya think he give us different punishments? Not to get us messed up amongst us hey?"

"He hit you?"—Scavoney.

Say my name, say my name, swished through Jerko's ear arteries as he didn't move a muscle in the gloom; so I'll know.

It came. "Wasn't who crowned Jerko he was inerested in, see. Hoho no. Was me. My-y-y fyuchaah . . . hey Tar you got your cherce too."

"What cherce?"

"Want to be like Adolf Hitler or Abraham Lincoln?"

"I be Abraham Hitler"—Scavoney.

Dead hanh. Then neither one. You don't sucker me on no stiffs. What he give you? You put that all-morning manure scraping on us and you pull a sneakout too me and Scavoney is through. WHAT HE GIVE YOU?

"Ah . . . just a little beythday present for telling him a thing or two when he try to make me cottage grandfather. No movies; I scrub the can all week; no Gangbusters." *Don't go light and mean Rio.* "Just enough to let me know who Packy-boy is."

In the silence just before the whistles Jerko heard one beat take too long, then he lost it in Rio's "Did I turn on you, you dummern dog dung Dutchman when you got nothing to what I got? No. Cause I knew Foureyes was trying to bust us up—for Packy f'Christmas."

When Scavoney shrieked, "That squealer! I cut his heart out," Jerko was sure they'd caught the creak as he began to ease up the stairs backwards. But nobody dashed. And Tarzan's hoarseness was just thoughtful—"I'm taking no more grief—Think this poker'd go all the way up the Jerk?"

"What kind of talk is that boyees? 'Member it's *Packy* you

have referentts to. The big guy around here. The Pett."

"Not—Ta—Me—He—Ain't."

"Ah baloney. Hey we're gonna buy him beer and—"

"Do his work, huh Rio, kiss his coula yeyeh—" Scavoney was farther away.

"Sure, we won't hurt a hair of his little pinky."

"Naw." Tarzan brayed.

"Naa," the walls rang faintly, "not *much*."

Jerko crept up still another flight to the night lavatory by the sleeping room.

There, after a time, he heard the clanging of the inspection bell. They drew closer—yells of guys conked with peacoal-loaded snowballs, the 'yaay's' of the conkers . . . *pocksh*, the balls began to break upon the basement way.

"Hey you scare mammocat," Fatso Mears was roaring.

"Upyagool with a Mellowrool!" But the pelting died.

"Yah," returned the good-natured bellow, "I kick you teeth down you troa." Nobody bothered big black Fatso, and because he never picked on you, you thought he'd be the one who'd stick up for you but he never did. If only I'd ate and ate while They'd stunted their growth with cigarets, Jerko thought. Still it hadn't helped Tootcarl to cram scrapings till his belly stuck out farther than his behind . . . if noise was power, Fatso would be boss. He was singing what he'd made up on the official song when Adjustmentville in the time of Fireballs had been Happy Hill Farm for something Boys.

"Oh we're the boys of Crappy Hill
you heard so much about,
The people stops and swears at us
whenever we go out—"

Others joined in, their voices dwindling into the basement.

"Oh everbody knows us for the rotten things we do
And everbody hates us and we hope you hate us too".

Now it was silent outside. Jerko lingered by the window and stared at the mauled white grounds. Past a tree the five red brick buildings stood in a row above the highway . . . more like fire trucks than trailers.

Christ he'd run away.

Once when he thumbed a ride they asked him questions and when he said he was going to Miss Teevan or for a job they saw he was a Breeze end turned him in. He was older now.

He didn't make for the door fast enough to miss his face. He stopped

to thrust close and pry something from it—strong or keen. Stern lips slashed from the rest by mirror crack stated, "I'm running away. Hell with washing the splotches." And then his name reverberated. His new name. He peered over the stairhead: still a chance, since the cottage father was calling from the basement, to get out the front door. He'd slid half way down to the main floor when poundings flooded the basement steps and the 'Jerko's' began. He scuttled back up and tore for a side dorm window. Remembering fire drill, he fumbled into a canvas sling. His name had spread to outside where it was mostly "Hey Jike!". This meant those starting to chase around for him in the snow were led by The Greek who was growing strong and sat at Rio's table. How could they help spotting him the slow way a sling went down? They might grab the counter sling before he reached the ground, haul him up again and try to jounce him out . . . anyway, no money. The canvas dropped to the floor. He heard himself called this time by those who'd pray to catch him alone among the cot rows. He didn't wait.

Tin slammed. From the two sides of the locker room clothes were being slung out onto long benches. Fatso Mears drumsticks plugged a mesh of jabberings confused by the concrete walls. Ceiling bulbs seemed sharper.

"Where have *you* been?" the cottage father demanded. As Jerko started his mumble, the man snatched Mears' drumsticks and whanged on a locker. "Quiet!" Then to Jerko, "Get your stuff out."

He was glad the cottage father hadn't spoken to him as if he were pet. Keeping his eyes just ahead of his feet, he made his way to number seventeen. He faced it, and he waited until his line from Red Cohen to Tootcarl was looking, as it always did at this point. The back of his head crawled with knowing he was also watched from Across the Way. Then at sway-backed attention, he saluted his locker door, and with phoney violence yanked it open. Punky clothes entangling shoes, tarred cork from Coney stuck with flesh cheesecake cards, a hand-me-down cap with the 'SAY' missing from 'CONFUCIUS', the shell of his Judas turtle, a split Louisville slugger. toppled and cascaded out onto the floor.

There were only a couple of laughs. The nasal snicker was not among them.

Always They'd laughed at this, somebody saying, "Hey Rio pipe the Jerk," and kept hooting while Old Fireballs had gotten a beet puss barking at him like a sergeant.

He tried again. He met Mrs. Asterpoop and, doubletalking, brought up a sock to his nose· "Wheeyew!" He dropped it, went on grim-

acing. "Yaws yaws Mrs. Asterpoop," and swaying backward in asphyxiation, collapsed onto the bench. He made his head strike loudly. Tootcarl looked across and stopped in the middle of a chortle.

The cottage father loomed with a pencil and list pad.

"Come on, Packy. Work shoes?"

"Here," Jerko pointed. He's always whipped clothes at this question so the shoes would fly funny.

"Comb. Toothbrush?"

"Thought I had it."

"Looked in the junk closet?"

Jerko started for the end of the row. Right through the shirts of the fellows he was hardly brushing, he could feel it. Tootcarl didn't get out of the way. He sent a shoulder through Tootcarl.

"Hey Jike, what he say about bullying?" shouted The Greek, band-aid dangling like a wattle from a boil by his mouth. "Hey Mr. Odells." It did not carry through the hum.

Tootcarl stepped back into place; his set-back features rode buck teeth defiantly. Jerko slid around him.

Kneeling before the junk closet Jerko began to poke among the lost things. When he had an idea that attention had lifted from him a little, he sneaked a look through the screen of legs.

"Shoes?" the lips of the new cottage father were forming through the noise. Rio flipped a hand at his stuff, all there in neat piles on the bench, and turned his back. Tarzan leaned broad cheekbones splotched with whitewash down to Rio and said something. They were looking over at Seventeen. Scavoney, following their gaze, hooked thumb and finger to his windpipe and gasped a tongue.

But Rio just stood there gather-shouldered, his bony head drooped forward, the old-man sockets on the floor, the green keeping Jerko's things deeply in view. Make a dirty motion behind Odells, Jerko willed him; shake a fist. *Anything* like a kid.

Abruptly he dipped back into the mouldering pile; that flick might nail him there on his haunches, peering. After he found a toothbrush he continued to mess. God could walk all around that basement and never be seen. Lucky Mammocat and Supercatso—they could live in plain sight . . . something had gone across to his locker and missed him; hung living there waiting for him to walk back into it.

"Got that toothbrush?" the cottage father called.

Jerko held up coated bristles. He got to his feet as slowly as he could; if anything was said to him along the line as he dragged back, he didn't hear. His stomach had shrunk around a steelie. He

slumped before the man.

"Necktie?"

Jerko pointed to the floor. "Looking right at you." A jolt at what had popped out—then a squeeze of wonder went through him.

"Sweatshirt?" The cottage father was studying him over his pad.

"Dunno."

"You don't know?"

"Y-you heard me."

Quiet had swept down the room. The cottage father stood over the boy. "What's got into you Graber? Just because—You can't talk to me like that!"

Jerko's wits scattered at the tone, but the second time the question beat down they were together: no longer surprised at himself—he had a brain—backing, seizing courage from word to tremulous word, he knew that some part of him had decided it in the shadow of the junk closet.

"Ain't nothing wrong with me. Do this. Do that. Keep riding a fellow. Pickin' on him for a dirty puss. I'm so frigging sick of this dump I could puke—" Shocked at leaving behind the point at which he was prepared to be struck, maddened by the stretchout of his expectant flinchings, Jerko inhaled the silence. "Yaa," he flamed, "Like a goddam cosentration camp that's what it is. Yaa stealing movies, trying to make squealers out of regular guys!" The screech cracked, exalted, into weeping. "You get *fun* out of it." He ran. The windowed door slammed behind him. "Upyagool."

A pane splintered.

The cottage father stopped to grab Jerko's cap and jacket before striding out after him into the snow. There he clamped an arm and tried to make the cringing face look up. Twice he began to speak; then he ordered, "Go get a shovel. Shovel the walks, this drive, and out under the clothesline. And if you ever again . . ." He snaked the boy a number of times.

Jerko managed to keep turned so the heads clustering the doorway and the furnace room windows wouldn't spot him blubbering. "Cut," the man said and, flinging his things, went back to the basement.

When the cold worked through Jerko put them on.

Inspection was over by the time his shovel began to scrape. They came pouring out. Without raising his head he saw them settle into little, changing groups. Nobody made a move to jam snow down his neck.

Fatso spoke through a quieting crossfire of chatter. "How much he paying you, Jerko?"

The answer was directed to the iron roughing along under the fluff: "Thousand bucks and a trip to Coney."

"Haha I bet, haha." Tootcarl and someone laughed with Fatso.

Though Jerko wasn't openly on guard, nobody charged him. The groups had drifted into a curious half-circle. Jerko puttered on. "Crookt my movies away," he growled, deciding to stay home. The half-circle studied him; their pant legs flapped in the breeze.

From its centre, Tarzan said, "Hey Schmoolewitz looka what Foureyes dropped."

The shovel stopped in mid-air. Schmoolewitz was what They had fun calling each other all week—up to today. And Tarzan had spoken it to Rio. The runny harlequinned face now turned full and defenselessly upon them.

Under the crown which uptied helmet flaps made, eyes like a chlorine pool jumped to a fix on a pack of cigarets in Tarzan's hand. Rio's palm sagged open. "Come across—Schmoolewitz."

Jerko's lungs filled to a hurt. Wildly, testing further, he swung his shovel at Tootcarl, crying, "Odells gets nosy here's what—" Tootcarl shrank with the reaction that had named him. Jerko pounded knuckles into the pudgy bicep. "Say that again!"

Tootcarl bawled.

"Hey shaddap you Carl," warned the Greek.

Jerko yelled to Fatso, "Hey that's Foureyes bending over," and ran his shovel at a white hummock off the drive. Ice-welded cinders underlay the snow; and the handle, catching in his stomach, vaulted him to a full length fleshy thud. But he couldn't feel sick:

Loudest among the guffawers, Tarzan was swatting his knees. And Rio . . . the thin lips stretched. They held that way, a line of membrane that just opened. Then the cock of Happy Hill, of Adjustmentville, squinting at an exact spot in the evenly bleak sky, said, "Oh, Odell'll get his one of these days," and turned to the basement. "Let's crack one with Supercatts." They followed and left Jerko unknotting slowly all over. Happiness climbed his nape like fright.

For it was to him as well as to Tar and Scavoney what Rio had said about Odells. Yes to *him* . . . had smiled, confided. Like him and Rio were close . . . by a locker—the trembling shook him again—whispering how they would get a guy across the way . . .

Brains, boy. Stuff.

Jerko grabbed for the handle, and smirking, snuffling tuneless things, began to shovel like mad.

Experiment in Isolation

A. E. Farebrother

Riding the lookout on top of the steeple,
Strong and unafraid above the midnight clock
Whose white face he could not see,
He crowed over the sleeping town
Where no one guessed how tall he was
And none could hear him cry
Under the black sky.

Howling defiance to the muted people
Herded in the night, he listened for echoes
Of his own voice but heard no sound;
The cushioned quiet lay undisturbed
On the graveyard shadows below
Where leaves nodded to bones
Of illegible stones.

Slowly the cold hands wrinkling round his heart
Restored his mobile head to the impediment of legs
Whose cramped toes arced on a narrow rim.
Where was the rope he had tossed
Against the sky? Without his weight
It slithered down the steep roof
Like a pensive reproof.

Roughly the stone nibbled his blind fingers
As he reached one hand for the lost way out.
In the back of the book the sum
Of the heights doubled the width of the base
Since four is greater than pi.
The dark that swung in the hollow
Begged him to follow.

Never to evade the plumed and flaming eye
Was terrible; it watched him hide his luck pieces
Behind the water-mill,
Then laughed him to fragments with questions.
Now with the hole in his head gone
He felt under foot that trouble
Was only a bubble.

From the marrow of his bones the slime crawled
Down blood-stained alleys of fear. He tied his shirt
Round the arms of stone according to plan,
But the flag said, repeat your message.
Had he flung off the eye because
A conqueror cannot return
The suit with unconcern?

He could not curry salve from the blue duchess
Whose stony lips had crushed the battering tree.
Seven veils hid beauty's mask of lies;
While truth, ugly in the green light
On Mona's stairs, often seen
And never climbed, plaits her hair
In rituals of despair.

Should he drop down the roof to the edge, then leap
Past the clock into this side of night
To crack on the steps? Or south
Where the ridge folds two realities?
Eastward the lawn was stained by fall;
And gains ill-gotten bruised the graves
Of Western slaves.

He, the centre of a burning star, could bridge
Oceans, raze mountains, or for his friends,
Spray rivers over the dry fields;
Had they let him be, his seed
Could banish hunger, now
The light of the rose would never show
If he let go.

Diving over the swan's back beyond the dance
He was an axe chipping the white centuries
Of obedient corpses whose blank faces
Watched from the convention hall
His heart beating in the tube.
Ants wrestled heroes forgotten
As the unbegotten.

Prey of the world whose solitude he hated,
Soliciting his time in the years of death,
Interrupted by the dotted line
Of leaping bullets, he had split
The world and brought to light
The worms where he had thought to find
The secret of his mind.

Hesitating on the lip of decision
Long-drained of desire for encounter,
Pinned on the curve of negation
To a hole centred in chaos,
He did not hear the long scream
The pall-bearers elucidate
Now it is too late.

MILLER BRITTAIN

Miller Brittain of Saint John began his studies at the Art Students League under Harry Wickey. He first exhibited with the Canadian Society of Graphic Art in 1936. At that time Graham MacInnes said, "Brittain has more right than anyone since Kreighoff to be called the Canadian Breughel." The pictures in question were social satire, the best known of which were "Little Theatre Rehearsal" and "D'Ye Ken John Peel". Around 1940 he was included in a series of four-man shows at the Art Gallery of Toronto. A portrait of P. K. Page was bought from this show by the International Business Machines Corporation. From 1938 he experimented with various painting techniques. Two of these early efforts are owned by the N. B. Museum. He continued to paint commissioned work and otherwise until he was accepted by the R. C. A. F. in 1942 after an unsuccessful attempt to join up in 1939. He became a bomb-aimer and completed a tour of operations between August 1944 and February 1945 from Number 78 Squadron R. A. F., Breighton, Yorks. Later he became an Official War Artist with the R. C. A. F. and worked in London for several months after which he worked in Toronto till his discharge in July, 1946. Around April, 1947, he began to work on religious themes in a technique he developed combining tempera and pastel. Although he has done a few paintings in the mixed technique, work in the above-mentioned pastel and tempera medium has been his chief means of expression. He has had little opportunity to show any of them but one was given the Rous and Mann award for the outstanding drawing in any medium in the Graphic Arts Society show in 1947, one was bought last fall by Hudson Walker, New York, Executive Director of American Artists Equity, and a group were shown at the Dayton Museum in June under the sponsorship of Mrs. Otto Spaeth, a vice-president of the American Federation of Arts, Washington, D. C. He has a contract for a mural in the D. V. A. Hospital in Saint John, which he will begin to carry out soon, and he also plans to start a school in the near future.

SELF-PORTRAIT

ADAM AND EVE VISITED BY ANGELS

A Note By The Artist

One experiences life and reacts to it in a variety of ways. I must try to find the right way. That is my aim in art and life and my work embodies the struggle. The beauty of the drama of inanimate nature moves me deeply, but the trials, the errors, the absurd antics and the triumphs of Everyman affect me more. In my early work I attempted to record what passed before me with truth and humour. Now while more acutely conscious than ever of the rich and varied texture of human life, I do not wish so much to record it as to let it work on me, and the resulting visual image may take quite another form from the circumstance that prompted it. For instance an impression I receive of domestic felicity, may emerge as a picture of Adam and Eve visited by angels. I have drawn freely from the human emotional drama of the Bible, partly because of its picturesqueness, but mainly because it is played out against the conception of a suffering and triumphant God. Most often I do not begin with an idea of any kind but merely play with shape and colour, allowing the forms to emerge as they will. Here is where I quarrel with non-objective painting which seems to me to stop half-way by not joining hands with the natural world and man's experience. I believe that all thoughts and feelings are grist to the painter's mill and hate and fear as well as love have been my themes when I have felt them. Are the non-objective boys too pure to come to terms with nasty humanity? There is a sentence of Milton's (transcribed from Aristotle) apropos of the above remarks which I believe to be worth quoting: " . . . by raising pity and fear, or terror, to purge the mind of those and such-like passions . . . with a kind of delight stirred up by reading or seeing those passions well-imitated".

Along with the development of the artist's thought must go the expansion of his technical means which is an ever-rewarding experience in itself. I have had many thrills by the adventurous use of colour to intensify my message, and by the search for new means to make my forms vibrate and move. These things compensate when other rewards seem to be lacking.

Miller Brittain

Two Poems

David Stacton

Acidia

How can you love the world so much,
who cannot love at all
the men and women of the world,
and yet who love them all?

Tell me the answer if you can,
for answer there is none.
Who questions answers and who knows
the answers, but knows none?

How do you balance love and death
and life and death, who can
love everything, and yet not love
those who do not, but can?

How are the riddles solved by those
who have no answers ready?
How can you answer none of this,
but keep your answers steady?
And how can I ask you all of this,
who know all this already?

Informer

Who shot what? It was not I.
Who was there? Who saw it die?
Who ran screaming to confess
to priests, gods, neighbours and the press?
It was not I. I did not die.

Who was it buried what so well?
Who was bribed, coaxed, begged to tell
it happened so, such, why and how?
And who cares now? And who cares now?
It was not I. I did not die.

Who buried Caesar? Who his wife?
Who gave his praise? Who gave his life?
Who played the coward? Who the craven?
Who Elijah? Who the raven?
Who needed feeding? Who was fed?
And who will die? And who is dead?
Who cares if someone said this was
another slain man, culture, cause?
Who cares since it could not be I?
I did not die. I did not die.

Film

Guy Glover

M. SARTRE'S INFERNAL MACHINE

Jean Paul Sartre, the philosopher and synthesiser of 'Existentialism', does not confine himself to the all-but-impenetrable darkness of his philosophic cave. He has come out into the open to write popular pamphlets, short stories, novels and plays, and in these various forms he has shown remarkable talent. Most recently he has turned to the moving picture and has written several scenarios, of which one, 'Les Jeux sont Faits', has been produced. Provided with English sub-titles, it has been released on this continent as 'The Chips are Down'.

Having entered the box-office arena with a moving picture made for general release, M. Sartre must obviously permit us to scrutinize him without the elaborate apparatus of philosophic jargon; and in taking notice of 'The Chips are Down' we need simply ask ourselves: (1) What does it contribute to our entertainment, enlightenment and edification? (2) Is it a good movie? (3) What are its chances in our theatres?

'The Chips are Down' is a sort of grim melodrama of ideas. Its story is set in a country occupied by a dictatorial power, and it deals with a working-class man, who is the leader of an underground resistance movement, and an upper-class woman who is the wife of a Prefect of Police suspected of collaboration with the occupying regime. The woman and the man are unknown to each other at the beginning of the film when, simultaneously, they are killed (the one by her husband who has gone through her money and is now making a play for her younger sister; the other by a collaborating traitor). The woman and the man meet in the world of the dead and there they come to feel that, had they known each other 'in life', they would have become lovers—because they were, they feel, made for each other.

The Powers-that-Be make the man and woman an offer: they may return to life to fulfill their desires, with the proviso that they must stay in love forty-eight hours after their return. If they can do

this, they will be permitted to live out together a life of normal span; if not, they must return to death.

The man has learned after death that his secret plan for an uprising the following day against the dictator, is known to the occupying authorities; that the dictator wants the uprising to go ahead as scheduled so that he can crush the underground resistance once and for all. The man wants to return to life in order to stop the uprising. The woman knows that her husband is having an only too easy success with her sister, and she wants to stop him. They have, therefore, besides their love, additional reasons for wishing to live again. They accept the offer, with its proviso which looks so simple.

They return to life and meet. Immediately their different social backgrounds and loyalties begin to complicate the flowering of their love and, indeed, their very existence as living beings.

It would be giving things away to tell the rest of the story and any story synopsis, in any case, would do scant justice to the ingenuity and excitement with which it is presented as a film.

Sartre maintains interest by a wide range of devices from both theatre and film—but that this interest might not equal for many that aroused by, say, "Lady in Ermine", goes almost without saying. For, although "The Chips are Down" presents ideas with a hard melodramatic punch, it is still a film of ideas and the greater part of our movie public is not too excited by ideas in its entertainments. The intellectually schematic quality of the film is hardly helped by the characters—which are two-dimensional, or by the situations—which are extreme. The picture is informed throughout by an almost inhuman tension which will make most audiences merely uncomfortable. That this is part of M. Sartre's intention one does not doubt.

One must mention here, however, that the actors of the two main roles do much to mitigate the diagrammatic quality of the writing. Micheline Presle as the woman is not only exquisitely beautiful, but acts her difficult part with poetic and sensual grace; and Marcel Pagliero with his dour face and manner displays an altogether impressive strength and sincerity. Both actors are able to suggest the tragic and pathetic among much that is merely melodramatic.

As a whole, "The Chips are Down" stops short of tragedy. It is as though Sartre considers tragedy frivolous, for he certainly denies us the satisfaction of katharsis. He is apparently not so much interested in purging our emotions, as in drawing our attention to a dilemma and then rubbing our noses in it. What could be more painful (or more timely) than an examination of the clash between individual

and social loyalties, between the concepts of love and service, in the context of a civilization which is seen to hedge both in with annihilating forces? This is the dilemma which "The Chips are Down" hurls in our teeth with a brutal disregard for our traditionally more sentimental preferences.

M. Sartre has taken to the film idiom with a refreshing innocence, and current conventions do not get much of his attention. The pictorial presentation does not depend much on striking camera-work (as it usually does in an Orson Welles film), and it is of this aspect of film technique that Sartre shows least awareness. But, for a professional philosopher, he does very nicely in other departments. He uses the old device, for instance, of inter-cut parallel lines of action, in a manner scarcely matched since D. W. Griffith. He has attacked the problem of how to depict the dead boldly and simply. And his use of sound is flexible and alive.

"The Chips are Down" may not be a great, or even a good, moving picture but in it M. Sartre has contrived brilliantly a diabolical machine to goad the mentally and spiritually lazy. We can hardly fail to admire the courage which he brings to his thankless task.

Poem

Marion Schoeberlein

My trumpets ache like the last prayer of mourning Job.
My words go reaching over heaven like David burning Sheba
On his harp. What shall I say for the dark bells in life,
How shall I comb my sorrow into peace? My lips have grown
Pain slowly, slowly as a death of pearl. Oh God, this love
Is fire's silent sob; this love must climb the stone dead
Rocks. The seas of scorn will break, and then there
Is nothing, nothing, nothing to sing on!

The Bird of Paradise

James Reaney

The bird of Paradise fades
And gray grows the Ace of Spades,
Cracked is the once loud bell
And low fall the fires of Hell.

The bird of Paradise, when wet
With dew, seemed a flying sunset;
And the Ace of Spades was blacker
Than a negro dipped in lacquer.
The bell summoned some to Heaven,
Told others it was half past eleven.
The fires of hell burnt a swarm of sinners,
In their heyday, and all the winners
Of bets on horses and sweepstakes, tch!
Tch! So my tongue like the wick
Of a lamp shall someday fail
Of any glinting words and pale
Shall falter with a sigh and pout
That all Fire, all Hell, all Poetry is out.

Reviews

Paterson, Book II, by William Carlos Williams. New Directions, Norfolk, Conn. 50 pages. $3.00.

Williams' much lauded "Paterson" does not appear to me, at least on the evidence of the first two books, to be the significant poem that it purports to be. It seems, at best, but a fragmentary and repetitious addition to American poetry. Moreover, the general tone is weary, verging at times on the pedestrian and dull.

It is written in Williams' mature, urbane style, which, however, does not completely fuse with or disguise the rather forced heartiness of the underlying Whitmanesque tone. This dislocation of unity extends to other aspects of "Paterson". Fragmentation seems to have become a fetish with those poets who most consciously strive to be 'modern'. In Williams' case the result is an unresolved mass of disparate elements: scraps of local reportage, excerpts from the very Jamesian styled correspondence between the poet and a woman, daily life in Paterson, N. J., the mythical level. The often mechanical application and heavy-handed underlining of the mythical aspects, which too often appear in "Paterson", does not really give a basic unity to the work.

In the matter of influence, Williams' poem displays much that would be considered dangerous in the work of even quite an immature poet. The aura of Whitman and Hart Crane hangs heavily over "Paterson", particularly in the rather shrill undertone we have already noted. Even more disturbing, however, is to find situations, symbols and rhythms, transplanted from other poets with little or no development or moulding to fit them to their new environment. In one place Williams would appear to be echoing Cummings, without Cummings' brutal punch. On more than one occasion the hand of Eliot is very apparent. One striking example, the reader would almost swear was from "Four Quartets", so derivative is the rhythm, diction and attitude assumed. This may be an eclectic age, but there are certain limits even to eclecticism. If the borrowing or influence is not assimilated

but merely bolted whole, it shatters any organic unity the particular poem may possess.

Williams' note in Book I laid out an ambitious plan. Books I-III were to deal with, roughly, the 'elemental character of the place', 'the modern replicas', and a 'language' for these. Book IV is to be 'reminiscent of episodes—all that any one man may achieve in a lifetime'. It is a pity, and seemingly a symptom of much of our modern poetry, that "Paterson" should be no better than it is. One might with justice expect more from a work intended to comprise so much.

Ronald Bates

Suicide Note by Curtis Reynolds. New Age, Los Angeles.

This little book, written under a pseudonym, purports to be the summation of the author's thinking, and a statement of cosmic dissatisfaction that the author can only resolve in death. He promises to commit suicide shortly.

Some will wonder why he didn't commit suicide before writing the book. No one will wonder why he wants to do it now. Anyone who can work himself up into such a pitch over banalities is perhaps better off out of the way—certainly out of the way of printing presses. His concerns are the usual philosophical conundrums familiar to every intelligent schoolboy: how big is space? where do we come from? what are we doing here? where are we going? why?

Finding no answers to these questions, most people accept the world's ignorance good-naturedly and substitute whatever comforting fiction seems most accommodating. But not so our brave author. Floundering in a marsh of metaphor and myopia, he cries that death is the only solution.

Let him jump.

R. G. Simpson

Notes From A Journey by Harry Roskolenko. The Meanjin Press, Melbourne.

An impressionistic travelogue of Place and corresponding Idea; a 46 page poetic diary of a man either paralysed by the horror of war or congenitally incapable of a deep, positive emotional reaction. They

are pseudo-emotional impressions in intellectual skirts. Does the agony leave us merely with a cerebral precipitate? The best poem—"Journey Back"—leaves me with the feeling that Roskolenko may be sensitive enough to proceed towards a synthesis of the emotive with his supremely dominating intellections—'my flowering nightmares'.

J. H.

Storm Below by Hugh Garner. Collins, Toronto. 227 pages. $3.00.

This story about a Canadian corvette in wartime is basically that of the disintegration of a ship's company and arises from the men's superstitious reaction to the carrying of a corpse on board. Out of this material Mr. Garner fashions an exciting tale made up of the personal variations on this theme. He never explains or argues the credibility of his story, but lets it stand on its own merits, with not too many concessions to the accepted prerequisites of popular fiction.

R. G. S.

Myssium by Norman Albert Levine. The Ryerson Press, Toronto. 8 pages. 50 cents.

"Myssium" is a chapbook containing nine poems by Norman Levine, a McGill student who has edited and contributed prose and verse to the college magazine, "The Forge". His flair for word-images sometimes produces effects both striking and clear, as in 'swallows . . . thump the water blue with their wings'. However the verse in "Myssium" suggests that his musical resources are limited. His prose in "The Forge" is youthful but colorful, and I think he will rid it of obvious poeticizations more easily than he will find a music for his verse.

J. S.

Canadian Comment

"The Rocking Chair and Other Poems"*, recently awarded the Governor General's Medal, is A. M. Klein's fourth book and easily his best. One of the most interesting poems is the "Portrait of the Poet as Landscape", originally published in "First Statement" and preceding in time the majority of the poems in this collection. It is interesting because it is in effect Klein's only statement of poetic intention since "Hath Not A Jew", and it corrects that nose-dive into antiquity by realizing the poet in his contemporary setting. Successful as an objective study, balancing satire with an oblique defence, it is also a personal poem in which the author acknowledges kinship with the 'relicts' who, rejected by modern society, 'make . . . haloes of their anonymity'. It is the personal element that is important in the creative result. In this "Portrait of the Poet" we first encounter the more subtle analysis and the contemporary techniques that characterize the work published in the present book.

When "Portrait of the Poet" was written in the early forties, Klein was associated with the Montreal Preview group and his new poems reflect their blending of Auden and Thomas. Occasionally we meet Auden face to face, as in the re-writing of "The Unknown Citizen" in the first section of the "Portrait of the Poet" ('Nobody, it appears . . . missed him enough to report'), or in the conclusion of the third section

> . . . desire affection, private and public loves;
> are friendly and then quarrel and surmise
> the secret perversions of each other's lives

More often we find the telegraphic style, the juxtaposition of abstract and concrete nouns, the mirror images and the Auden key words 'lonely' and 'private', 'hero', 'guilt' and 'loss'. From Auden through Page and Anderson comes the second 'shock of belated seeing':

> the lonelinesses peering from the eyes of crowds;
> the integers of thought, the cube-roots of feeling

In "The Rocking Chair and Other Poems" there is an increased awareness of the individual as integer and type—the conjunction of the private loneliness and the crowd—and a discreet use of psychoanalytic techniques.

**The Rocking Chair and Other Poems* by A. M. Klein. The Ryerson Press, Toronto. $2.25. 56 pages.

From Auden the 'mirroring lenses forgotten on a brow . . . that shines with the guilt of their unnoticed world': from Thomas

> the torso verb, the beautiful form of the noun
> and all those shaped and warm auxiliaries

or a way of making the lenses sparkle and glow. From Auden the identity of the individual and his surroundings, reduced to intellectual order: from Thomas the identity felt and experienced in intimate, physical terms 'until no join is seen between flesh and flesh . . . between hair and grass' (the quotation is from Patrick Anderson's "Summer's Joe"). The deliberate congestion of rime, part-rime and assonance, of liquids and sibilants, suggests Hopkins as seen through Thomas:

> Upon the ecstatic diving board the diver
> poised for parabolas, lets go
> lets go his manshape to become a bird.
> Is bird, and topsy-turvy
> the pool floats overhead and the white tiles snow
> their crazy hexagons. Is dolphin. Then
> is plant with lilies bursting from his heels . . .
>
> His thighs are a shoal of fishes: scattered: he
> turns with many gloves of greeting
> towards the sunnier water and the tiles

Such music shines the glass of self until the self is one with its reflection. And so the hero with the private wish comes into his own.

But Thomas' influence is less direct than Auden's and neither is left unabsorbed in the poetry as a whole. Auden and Thomas serve as midwives, enabling Klein to fuse the sometimes disparate intellectual and sensuous aspects of his work. His first book, "Hath Not A Jew", established him as a lyrical ironist, who was sometimes obtrusively sweet or bitter but succeeded in several poems in striking the balance between sentiment and his satiric talent. "Poems" (1944), published after "The Hitleriad" but containing the re-writings and tag-ends of "Hath Not A Jew", showed at least a temporary failing of the Jewish theme and of the lyricism. In "The Hitleriad" and such poems as "Pawnshop" and "In Memoriam", with which Klein's work entered a second phase, there was a new, bitter satire, a more marked social and intellectual consciousness, and technically a shift from light riming stanzas to heavy couplets or stanzaic blocks of architectural pentameters. With the exception of some pen-portraits in "The Hitleriad" these poems were both dull and directionless: yet it is clear from this distance that they represented part of a maturing process. For in "The Rocking Chair and Other Poems", with its re-

discovery of the sensuous world, Klein achieves a new, more intense lyricism fortified by sophistication and a tough logic. With the joining of the two main strands in his development he finds a richer and fuller expression than before.

That does not mean that there are no unsuccessful poems in the collection. There are weak poems such as "The Sugaring", whose failure is exaggerated because Klein is sometimes tempted to force his theme and reluctant to abandon any poem once begun. When he cannot persuade his reader he buries him in rhetoric:

> O, out of this calvary Canadian comes bliss,
> savour and saving images of holy things,
> a sugared metamorphosis!
> Ichor of dulcitude
> shaping sweet relics, crystalled spotlessness!

Is the reader stubborn? Then bury him in polysyllables, riddle him with consonants, bisect his skull with exclamation marks!

But the number of successful poems in this book is proportionately very large, and the number that are more than just successful is considerable. Among the latter group I would put "The Rocking Chair", "Frigidaire", "Dress Manufacturer: Fisherman" and "The Break-Up". I would also include the wonderfully moving description, "Winter Night: Mount Royal", Monsieur Gaston" and the "Portrait of the Poet as Landscape", and I would be tempted to add "Lone Bather" and "Filles Majeures". If I had to choose the one poem that impressed me most it would be "Political Meeting".

For one thing, "Political Meeting" enables us to see in perspective the relationship between the Klein of "The Rocking Chair" and of "Hath Not A Jew". Like some of the best of the new poems, this sketch of Montreal's mayor demonstrates the talent for portraiture which distinguished "Hath Not A Jew" and kept alive the mid-period satire, "The Hitleriad". There is a similarity between the Elijah who made the children laugh while he led them on to a 'wonderful synagogue', and this Orator who hides his serious purpose with 'wonderful moods' and 'tricks', which sometimes extends even to detail (Elijah 'pranced like a bear' and the mayor 'makes bear's compliments'), and there is a similar blend of sentiment and irony in both poems, focusing first on the antics of these 'country uncles' and then shifting to the contrast between their clowning and their deeper purpose. But "Political Meeting" is an achievement superior to "Elijah" or to any poem in "Hath Not A Jew". The literary influences in "The Rocking Chair and Other Poems", present here in musical overtones or in turns of phrase ('the hall is yellow with light, and

jocular' and so on) help to sharpen the wit and give warmth and movement to the poem. They are never used to distort reality, as such influences so often are, and they are firmly balanced by the selection and arrangement of colloquial detail:

> Worshipped and loved, their favourite visitor,
> a country uncle with sunflower seeds in his pockets,
> full of wonderful moods, tricks, imitative talk,
>
> he is their idol: like themselves, not handsome,
> not snobbish, not of the *Grande Allée! Un homme!*
> Intimate, informal, he makes bear's compliments
>
> to the ladies; is gallant; and grins;
> goes for the balloon, his opposition, with pins

It is this re-creation of the commonplace in the form of portraiture that Klein does best, a fact which may have been evident from "Hath Not A Jew" but which is only now being confirmed.

"Political Meeting" adds a necessary dimension to the portrait in this book of the French Canada which Klein is sometimes tempted to sentimentalize into a 'candy-colored world'. Other poems may suggest the oppressive weight of French Canada's history or the oppressive nature of forces bearing on Quebec from the outside world; but still they hang out a placard reading 'No one over 16 allowed' and depicting a French-Canadian who is the victim of naivete ("Spinning Wheel") or of second childhood ("The Rocking Chair") or of endless ogreish children who devour every adult in sight ("Annual Banquet: Chambre de Commerce"). In "Political Meeting", on the other hand, we find two main images nicely played off against each other: the picture of the kindergarten race in passages such as the one quoted above, and the other and grimmer side of the picture that is interjected warningly here and there through the early stanzas of the poem ('the agonized Y initials their faith', 'the scarecrow thing . . . that shouts to thousands the echoing . . . of their own wishes'), and that mounts in intensity through the final stanzas, giving the poem a new height and depth, until the sultry conclusion 'and in the darkness rises . . . the body-odour of race'. Through the poem the theme of martyrdom is subtly suggested by 'the agonized Y', the line, 'Outside in the dark, the street is *body*-tall' the mass identity with the Christ image in the conclusion 'The whole street wears *one face* . . . shadowed and grim' and the repeated cry of the anti-conscriptionist orator, 'Where are your sons?' The restraints imposed on the French Canadians by their religion, the poet implies, acccumulate those feelings of self pity and resentment to which the orator appeals with

his agonized refrain.

Klein has always been preoccupied with this theme of martyrdom. But in "Political Meeting", perhaps because he is concerned with another people than his own, he examines the subconscious motives that may intensify the sense of martrydom produced by an external situation. Partly for this reason, the poem has a depth of meaning that is lacking in the Jewish poems. It gains a further intensity by bringing together the dominant images of Klein's work—the images of the martyr and the clown—and so focusing the conflict in the poet between his intellect and the beliefs of his own people. To bolt orthodoxy whole, is more than the poet can do; yet he laments the poverty of his unbelief (as he does in "The Cripples"), and he cannot let go. The poetic irony is produced by this unresolved situation. It is at once a means of escaping from orthodox belief and of softening its rigidities to make them more acceptable. The poetry revolves on the need 'to make a pleasure out of repeated pain', using laughter to lighten the pressures created both by the strictures of faith and the energies required to guard them from attack.

If we can understand Klein's vitality in these terms, we can also appreciate his limitations. The conflict may be by-passed on the emotional level—through the memories of boyhood and their symbolic identification with the French-Canadian world—but it remains unresolved and is seldom touched on directly. Thus, while it would be untrue to say that the poetry lacked a backbone of values, it must be admitted that its structure is ambiguous and dim. We are aware both that Klein is writing out of a tradition and defending himself against it.

Canadian writing may be too solemn as a rule but some of our best writers have been humourists. We have had a number of country uncles in Canadian prose—beginning with Haliburton and coming down to Leacock and Robert Fontaine—and something of their spirit is reflected in the poetry of Klein, Pratt and MacKay. To understand the reason we need go no further than Klein's "Political Meeting". For, after all, the picture there of French Canada is true of puritan Canada generally, and the conflict it reveals in the poet has its counterpart in other Canadian writers. Our cheeks are bound to glow in the puritanical north. We laugh because we are so desperately serious.

John Sutherland

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